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# The pleasant art of getting your own library

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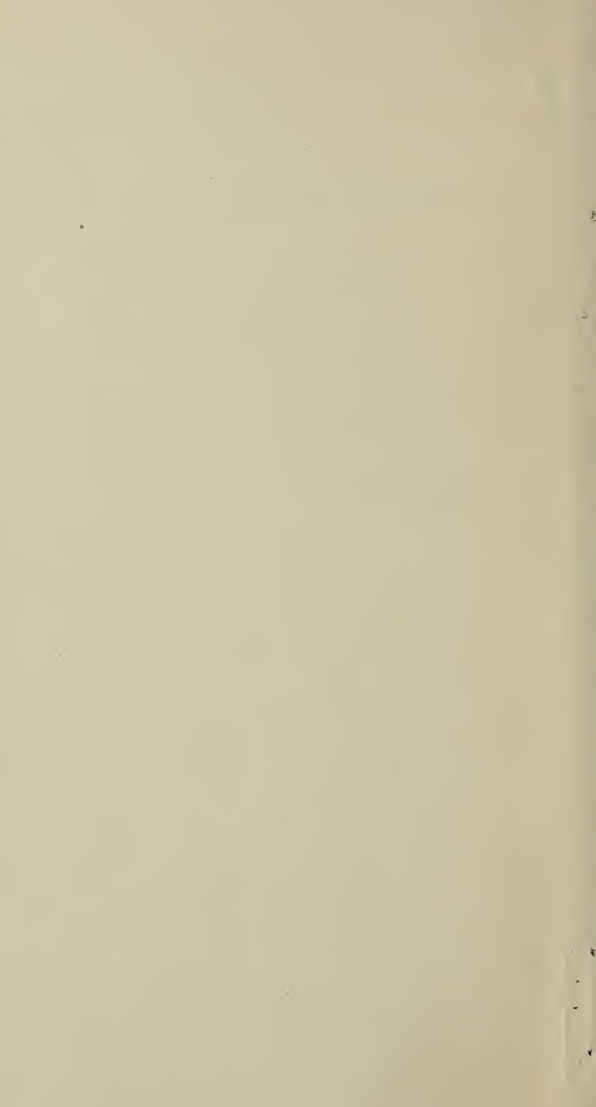
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# The pleasant art of getting your own library

Buy some books

Everyone should buy books. By that I mean: every person of intelligence, able to read ordinary print with some ease, will find that the habit of owning books, and having them about him, will give him more pleasure in the long run than any other habit he can form. Only a few buy and read books, to be sure; but then, only a few get out of life all the pleasure they are capable of getting. So the small number of the bookish does not prove anything except that the wise are always few!

But if I don't read?

But you may say you rarely read books, and so why buy any?

To this there are several answers. One is that books make fine furnishings. They do good to the room they stand in. They give your house an air, and you are obliged to breathe that air.

Then, too, they are tempting. Who knows when you will yield to the temptation to enjoy books if they are always at hand?

And, again: there are family and friends; perhaps they will bless you for giving them

a chance at pleasures which you miss yourself.

And, again: buying books is a joyful task, and you cannot give your mind to it for ever so short a time each week or month, when you select the next volume for your shelves, without getting a subtle pleasure much beyond that of choosing a cravat or another picture or a new brand of cigars.

And one more: all book-buyers are bookish, even if they never read a single line in their books. You meet followers of book fads, first editions, American history, 16th century poetry or what not, who will tell you they buy but do not read. Don't believe them. They may not read what they collect; but you may be sure they have their own private bookish tipples, in which they quietly indulge and out of which they get a mild but penetrating literary intoxication.

But here are reasons enough. The point is proven. It pays to buy books.

What books shall I buy?

Buy what you like. It's the same rule, you see, as the Great Rule about Reading! Often one knows the kind of books he likes, when he reads them; but does not know how to find more of that kind.

You easily get around this trouble by asking your book-dealer. You will tell him

that you like this book and that book and the other, and that you want to find more of the same kind. The dealer makes a pretty good guess at what is wanted and sets out for you a dozen or a score of volumes for you to taste and choose from. In this way you buy quite safely, and so do not cumber your shelves with books that are not in your line.

Or, you may say you want books of such a kind that, if you read them you will be informed on certain lines in which you are interested. Here the dealer's task is easier. He can give you names, authors, publishers and prices of the best books on the subjects you have in mind, and can tell you which are elementary, which are accurate but dry, which are general but interesting; and, if the subject is one with two sides to it, which are the best books on each side.

The librarian of your public library will also be able to help you greatly. The library of course has more variety of books than any book-dealer can afford to carry. By looking over the books which the librarian will show you, you can decide what you want and can have your dealer order them for you.

Shall I buy many books at once?

Sometimes, yes. Suppose you have moved into a good-sized house from the cramped

quarters you have always lived in; suppose the children are come to the reading age; suppose your business is a little less pressing and in your evenings you are a little less weary—why then is the time to buy books by the yard. You know what are the subjects to read about, and so does your wife. Both of you know the kinds of novels you enjoy. Also you are sure you want the children to see on the shelves and to handle and look into and get acquainted with the good old books that they will later hear intelligent people mention, that they will find mention of in their reading, and that they will be meeting in their studies as they go through school and college. In such a case the selection is easy, and to buy hundreds of books in the first winter would not be extravagant or foolish.

Shall I get a big dictionary?

When the time comes, yes. But first get books that you or your family or both like to read. If there are children about you will find they use dictionaries in school, and you will wish to keep ahead of them by having a pretty good dictionary at home. If the family has the habit of talking about words and their exact meaning and how to pronounce, get a dictionary surely.



But you can begin with quite a small one. Some of the small ones are very good and vastly interesting to look into.

At your dealer's you can see one or two of the big ones, many of the small ones, and can learn about the rest. At the library you will find nearly all the dictionaries. Buy the kind that suits your needs.

Shall I buy an encyclopædia?

If you are the encyclopædia kind of person, yes. And when the children begin to pass the ten-year mark you should have one for them to pull down and handle as they will. But it is easy to waste good book money on an encyclopædia. There are many kinds, and the best one for you is the one, that, among those you can afford, you will use most. Some are for young people; some are for students; some are for average people with small incomes; some are for the well-to-do. In thousands of homes are non-fitting encyclopædias taking up good shelf room that entertaining novels might much better occupy.

Your dealer has or can get all the good encyclopædias large and small; he also has much information on sizes, kinds, bindings and cost.

What shall I say to book agents?

Traveling agents have persuaded many to buy books who would never have bought

them otherwise, and in this way they are helpful. But they almost never have anything that you cannot get cheaper at a store. Most of the things they offer are not what you really care for. Nearly all their "fine editions" are poor imitations of the real thing.

Since the recent disclosures as to the real value of some of the so-called *de luxe* sets the bookstores have taken over these books and offered them for sale at fair prices—often, indeed, at prices ridiculously low.

Treat the book agent kindly; wish him well in what is usually a perfectly proper business, but tell him you buy your books at stores.

Which are the books for me?

You speak of choosing your friends. You mean that, as you meet new people and come to know them, you naturally pick out those who appeal to you, who don't bore you, who help you to pass a pleasant evening now and then, who have something new to say, who help you to see things differently and make life more entertaining. You don't pick these friends on sight, and you don't select them on somebody's recommendation. You get to know them first and then hold to them if you like them.

Find your own books in the same way.

The process is easier with books than it is with men and women. Of books you can get careful descriptions, from which you can often tell which of them you will like. It is also much easier to examine a book than it is a possible new friend. The book is all there, in sight.

You pick your friends out of those who live and work much as you do. You will find the books you want to read in much the same way.

If you have not the book-buying habit at all and think you may like to work into it on some special lines, where do you want to begin?

You work at something? Buy books on that  
something

Start in your own business. Whatever it is, it has an interesting history; there is romance connected with it somewhere, surely, and probably also art, and very likely politics and war and strange adventures.

For example, shoes. There are museums of shoes. There are histories of shoes and books about shoes and famous and learned cobblers and shoemakers. All the long story of the invention and development of protection for the feet is full of curious, entertaining and amazing items.

And the literature today of leather and of all the other materials that go into shoes and of the machines that make them and of their distribution through the trade—of all this the literature includes hundreds of books of every conceivable kind, scientific, technical, commercial, biographical, historical. If you are in shoes, try a few of these books.

The same facts and the same suggestions apply to every calling.

#### From daily papers to house books

You must read the daily papers; then you need to read a few magazines of the popular kind and get short stories of modern life and to keep up on inventions, discoveries and what not; then you must look over your own trade papers, one, two, or even more—and there is still time left for buying and reading a few good books on your own calling.

Next, perhaps, first, get some books useful in the house. Books on cooking, furniture, decoration, music, dress, entertainments, games, hygiene and, if there are children, on their health and training; on their sports and pastimes.

On all of these and a score of other like subjects there are encyclopædias large and small, hand-books, manuals, guides, compendiums, treatises and histories. Of these household books, many of them most enter-

taining and most of them helpful, how few are found in homes! Even of cook books the supply is usually limited! If in doubt, then, about how to fill your new bookshelves begin with your own calling and go on to the everyday demands of the house.

Branch out and take in the two Americas

As for books on life and the world in general, here are two good ways to begin:

First, sit down with this list and consider whether books on any of these subjects would interest you:

*History of the great cities of the United States.*

*History of your own State.*

*Politics.*

*Industries.*

*Birds, insects, trees, shrubs, flowers, animals.*

*Rocks, soils, minerals, mines.*

*Farms and farming.*

*Railroads, canals, water commerce.*

*Roads of your own State or sister States.*

*Maps of your own State or other States.*

On all of these, and on the same subjects concerning the United States you can find, at the bookstore or at the library, books; also pamphlets and pictures.

Then look over this list:

*Our foreign trade.*

*The Panama Canal.*

*Mexico, Central America, Peru, Brazil; and the development and trade relations with our country of these and other South American countries.*

*Canada, its growth and our trade with it.*

*The far Northwest and the wonderful development of Oregon and Washington.*

*The Hudson, the Ohio, the Mississippi, the Columbia, the Great Lakes, the romance of their discovery and the wonders of their commerce.*

*The story of wheat, of corn, of cotton and the rivalries of the world's greatest grain-producing countries.*

*The tariff.*

*Our navy; our army.*

On a thousand things like these, about which you find brief notes in the papers every day, there are many books, some short, some long, some statistical, some narrative, and fascinating. If you want these in your own library, your book-dealer will get them for you.

Then take in the world

If nothing so far named has seemed to appeal to you, go a little further with the list. Perhaps you say that your newspapers and

magazines give you all you care to know on subjects like these. That may be true. But a trial of a book, by a man who knows what he writes about, will convince you that after all most journals only touch the outside of things. They cannot pretend to do more. Their editors give you a little of many things and not much of any one, except local news.

Here are a few suggested topics:

*Flying machines, dirigible balloons and submarines.*

*Great fortunes, trusts and labor unions.*

*Socialism, communism, anarchism.*

*Painting, cubists, futurists, sculpture, art, museums, architecture.*

*The history of the alphabet, of writing, of printing.*

*Printing today, its marvelous machines and how their product grows.*

*How we think.*

*The mind and the body.*

*Materialism, pantheism, monotheism, pragmatism.*

*Bergeonism, spiritism, monism, positivism.*

*Education in Egypt, Greece, Rome, China.*

*Public schools in America, England, Germany, France.*

*The origin of language.*

*Astrology, necromancy, alchemy, chemistry.*

*Myths, legends, fairy tales, superstitions.*

*Fire, electricity, light, heat, power.*

*What we mean by science.*

These items are only the merest suggestion of the thousands of topics of which your bookstore can furnish you many books and tell you of many others.

Take Egypt for example; you know something of its history, of the Nile and its dams, the pyramids, the temple just found in the Sphinx's head; of its government by the English and its recent growth. Leaving all these to one side, here is a little book on what Egypt did for civilization; brief, fascinating, astonishing and reliable. They were doing great things in Egypt 6000 years ago.

You can, under this first method of finding a starting point for book buying, either go over lists like those given above, or you can go over in your mind the topics you find in your daily and Sunday papers and jot down some subjects on which you think you may like to see a few of the best and latest books. Send this list to the library or book store and later call and see what they can show you. Then get your dealer to get for you what you want.



## Another way of finding your books

Get lists of some of the series of small books on all kinds of subjects that are now being published in England and America. Single volumes cost, bound, only 25 to 50 cents. The several series include books on hundreds of topics. There are "literary" books in plenty—novels, stories, poetry, plays, essays, letters, humor, with the best histories, biographies and travels and the great books on science, religion, art, philosophy and society.

Others are on subjects like these, each written by a man who knows:

*Evolution.*

*Heredity.*

*Science of the stars.*

*Synonyms.*

*Wellington and Waterloo.*

*The Nature of Mathematics.*

*Theosophy.*

*Syndicalism.*

*Co-operation.*

*Women's Suffrage.*

*Principles of Electricity.*

Look at these lists yourself, and pass them about in the home.

Some in the family are just now keen on boats, toy flying machines, tennis, football, wireless telegraphy, school hygiene, housing,

photography, the stage, motor cars, gas engines, moving pictures, dress, rugs, laces.

Wouldn't they like a book or two on their pet subjects?

### The fundamental family library

Now you have a library. It is yours and your family's, and it fits you all like an old glove, because you have put into it what you wanted, and not what somebody said you ought to want. You have bought according to your own and your family's taste, education and amusements. Your library contains the world's best books—the best for you; at least it does so far as you have gone. Only prigs and pretenders will find fault with it, even if it has not one of the old masters you were tortured with in school days and have joyfully avoided ever since.

### How about the great classics?

Well, what about them? Have you read them? Have you read *any* of them? Did you like them? If you bought a hundred of them would you hurry home every night to read them?

You must answer these questions yourself. If you like them, then they are your books, and you bought them long ago. If you are very, very literary, you have already read them whether you liked them or not.

If you wish to know how some of the greatest of our fellow-men looked at life and how they described what they saw and felt and thought, then you must read some of these world's greatest.

### Biographies

But don't forget that many of your greatest fellowmen never wrote at all! They did things, and said nothing for publication. (It's the same way today!) And while it is true, probably, that the writing of the great things in a great way is the greatest of all the things men have done, these greatest of all things—the World's Classics—may not enlighten you, may not give you joy; would only bore you, and there is a very fine and delightful and amazing and absorbing lot of life awaiting you quite outside of the covers of the Truly Great. If you are interested in what men of action have done, read the story of their lives. There are many interesting biographies, and some of them are extremely good literature.

### More about the classics

A short plea, which could be made longer and stronger, for some acquaintance with the Great Old Books is worth adding.

A few of the old books were so well written or told of such interesting things or

were so closely connected with popular mythologies and religion or with great leaders or reformers, or warriors, or adventures, or with great national events, that they came to be read or talked about by many, and especially by those who wrote, because they truly found the incidents and the things said in the earlier books to be interesting in themselves, genuinely human and wonderfully and universally true to life and very admirably told.

Thus it came about that books of all kinds, except perhaps the driest descriptive ones, are constantly referring to things in the Old Classics. Now, if you know enough about the old books to get the meaning of these countless references to them in the new ones, you, of course, understand the new ones better.

Then, too, it seems to be true that we get very great pleasure from recognition in reading, just as we do from recognition of scenery, cities, friends and acquaintances, and if one recognizes and understands the allusions in old books and the quotations from them in what he reads, he gets much more pleasure therefrom.

In any event, put a few of them on your shelves for the children to see and read if they will.

## The good work novels do

Novels have been increasingly with us for a round hundred years. For several thousand years men have taken pleasure in prose fiction. Like the ruler, the priest, the trader, and the artist, the story-teller has been with us from campfires to cities, and from huts to palaces. We cannot shake him off and would not if we could. He has been made known to ourselves. At his best he has interpreted life for us, broadened us and mellowed us; at his poorest he has diverted us and dimmed the memory of our troubles.

The novel today seems to express the present man more fully than any other form of literature. It can touch all subjects, express all feelings, teach all doctrines. Unless all signs fail, it is sure to widen its field still further, to become still more widely read, to teach us more readily, to set forth character, history, theories, ideals and doctrines more comprehensively still.

## Beautiful books

Immediately after printing was invented, 465 years ago, a few very beautiful books were printed. This was because the early printers naturally tried to produce with type and a press as beautiful work as centuries of practice had taught the copyists to make with the pen.

Soon, however, the printers had to compete for speed and quantity just as they do now. The result was that, after about the year 1500, only a few very carefully printed and very skillfully designed books were published until quite recent years.

In this country today are being printed some of the finest volumes ever seen. It would be worth your while to look at a few of them. If you find they give you pleasure, you should buy one or two, or more if your purse permits. They are works of art, just as are good paintings and good sculptures.

## Your bookstore

If this article of Mr. Dana's makes you feel like using our bookstore to learn what you want to about your kind of books, please do it. We want to help all we can. That is our business.

We are trying to make our service as broad and helpful as it can be ; to tell you what we know about books ; to find out for you what we don't happen to know ; to help you in choosing (if you want help) ; to have on hand the books most wanted ; to get any book ; to sell this most valuable merchandise in the best way, and—

To make you feel at home, whether you are buying or not. People who like books or think they like them, or think they'd like to like them, are always welcome at this store.

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